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Murder of the Mail Carrier

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MURDER OF THE MAIL CARRIER,

&c., &c.

THE MURDER.—SUSPICION AND ARREST OF AN INNOCENT MAN.—HIS ACQUITTAL.—OTHER ARRESTS.

On the morning of Friday, April 15th, 1859, the town of Brantford was thrown into an unusual state of excitement, by the intelligence of the brutal murder of Lancelot Adams, who was employed by Mr. Hale, Mail Contractor, to carry the night mail between Paris and Brantford,—a distance of about seven miles. The news of the perpetration of this dreadful deed threw alarm and consternation into the hearts of all who heard it, and in the course of the morning hundreds of our townsmen were seen travelling to and fro between the town and the scene of the heart-rending crime. The body was found lying on the side of the road, down the declivity of the hill, and near what is known as "Good's Hollow,"—about a mile and three-fourths from the limits of the town; the horse and wagon were found standing a short distance off. Upon examination it was ascertained that the unfortunate man had been shot, the contents of the gun (large squirrel shot) having taken effect in the left side of the face and head. Mr. Hale, who was one of the first on the spot, at once instituted a search for the mail-bags, which it was found had been taken some rods off, and rifled of their valuable contents.

The body was removed to "Good's School House," where a Coroner's Jury was summoned, and a *post mortem* examination held, when the shot were found embedded in the brain, and Drs. Henwood and Bown gave it as their opinion that the unfortunate man must have died instantly.

This foul and fiendish crime caused a desire in the minds of all to search for its perpetrator. Various were the surmises, suggestions, and suspicions; each had something to offer which, in his mind, might lead to the apprehension of the guilty parties; but, among the various opinions, there was one point upon which all agreed—that the deed had been committed by some person or persons acquainted with the locality, and cognizant of the regular time for the arrival of the mail; hence the conclusion that the guilt must rest upon some person in our midst; and strict inquiry was at once instituted for the purpose of ferreting out any suspicious circumstance that might have occurred.

At length it was found that two persons, named Cheesbro' and Dove, had hired a horse and wagon from the livery stable of Mr. Shakel, between the hours of nine and ten, the evening before, for the alleged purpose of driving

a couple of miles out on the Paris Road, to a farm that the mother of the latter-named person had sold a few days before; that they were to have returned before eleven o'clock; that the horse and wagon were returned by one of the parties in the morning about three o'clock; that he paid Mr. Shackell with bills torn across the end, and that he left on the morning train for the west. Search was made about the house just vacated by the Dove family, which was in the immediate neighbourhood of the murder; and, as a confirmation of what had been suspected, several letters were found lying about the house. Another strong circumstance was, that the same amount of money, upon the same Bank, as that paid to Mr. Shackell for the horse, had been taken from a letter sent from the Post Office Department to a party in town.

Telegraphs, describing the parties, Cheesbro' and Dove, were sent to the authorities east and west, in order that they might be apprehended; and Thomas McMeans, Esq., High Bailiff of Brantford, immediately set out in pursuit of them. At Paris he ascertained that Cheesbro' had taken the train for London. He took the next train, and, shortly after his arrival in London, found Cheesbro' in the custody of the officers there. Mr. McMeans brought his prisoner to Brantford, where he was lodged in Gaol for the night, to await his examination the following morning.

Early on Saturday morning, the 16th, a woman known as "Mary Dean" called on J. Weyms, Esq., J. P., and informed him, that she had been sent by Mrs. Moor—a colored woman—to tell her husband, Moor, who lived in East Ward, to leave as soon as possible, for the constables were after him; and that, at the same time, she mentioned something about the mail driver having been murdered. Mr. Weyms at once sent for the High Bailiff and two or three constables, and told Mary Dean to go immediately and deliver her message. He and the officers followed her at a respectful distance, and, upon her entering the house in which Moor lived, they rushed in and arrested Moor and another colored man, named Over, with whom Moor was living.

In the house they found two guns, one being a double-barrelled one; and upon the floor Mr. Weyms also found one-half of a $100 Bank Note. The guns were both loaded with shot, and the double-barrelled one had the appearance of having been lately charged. On examination, Dr. John Young Bown found, under the nail of one of Over's fingers, a small red substance which proved to be sealing-wax. From information received by the magistrates, they were led to believe that another colored man named Joseph A. Armstrong, who had been released from Gaol but a very few days, had also some knowledge of the murder, and he was at once arrested and placed with Moor and Over in the "lock-up." In the afternoon they were examined before the magistrates; but nothing of great importance was elicited. Both the mother-in-law and sister-in-law of Moor, who were living in the same house, swore positively that neither Moor or Over had been out of the house that night. The prisoners were, however, remanded for further examination on Monday.

In the evening of the same day, Cheesbro' was also examined; and, after adducing satisfactory proof of his whereabouts during the night of the murder, was acquitted.

FURTHER EXAMINATION.—THE BOY'S EVIDENCE.—CONFESSION OF ARMSTRONG.—COMMITTAL OF THE PRISONERS.—VERDICT OF THE CORONER'S JURY.

On Monday, April 18th, the examination of Robert Over, John Moor, and Joseph A. Armstrong was resumed. The prisoners were severally examined and their statements disagreed very materially. Both Over and Moor denied having been out with the guns for fully a fortnight or more, and solemnly declared they had not been out of the house on Friday morning before ten o'clock. In these statements, they were corroborated by Mrs. Sinclair, a widowed sister-in-law of Moor, who had been living with them for a length of time. Several colored men, however, swore as positively that they saw Over and Moor passing in the direction of Holmdale early in the morning after the murder—that they had but one gun when going in that direction, and that they returned in a few minutes with two.

CHAS. HENRY BROWN, a boy about thirteen years of age, and brother-in-law of Jno. Moor, whe had also been living in the house with them, having been sworn gave the following evidence:—"I have lived in the house with John Moor, Robert Over, Mrs. Sinclair, my mother and sister. I gather wood for the house, am home every night. On Thursday last Moor and Over went out to shoot, they said; John Moor loaded the double-barrelled gun, he loaded both barrels, can't say whether single barrelled gun was charged or not; Over had a knife about eight inches long, which he sharpened on Thursday; I went to bed quite early, and so did my mother; Mrs. Sinclair, my mother, Mrs. Over and my sister all went to bed; Over and Moor were out, I slept with my mother, little sister, and Mrs. Sinclair; Mrs. Over slept alone; I was awakned by the barking of the dogs during the middle of the night. Moor and Over came home late in the night.—Mrs. Sinclair got up and opened the door for them, and lighted the candle. The men and Mrs. Sinclair sat down about the stove. The men said that they were tried, and that the mail carrier was killed on the Paris road, that he was shot. Over and Mrs. Sinclair went to bed first. Moor remained at the stove and then slept on the floor. In the morning I was the first up. Moor in the morning said that he felt troubled, and Over said that he did not care. My mother heard them speak of the killing of the man. Moor and Over went away early in the morning before breakfast. They returned in an hour. My mother was up when they returned. Armstrong came to the house about supper time He asked Moor for $2, which he got. My mother was present. I saw a good deal of money in Moor's hands. He turned the money over on his knee, Mrs. Sinclair looking at him at the time. Over was also looking on. Over's wife was also there. Over had a pile of bills also, but Moor had the largest. Over's wife looked at them in his hands. Moor told me he would whip me if I told anything about what I heard, and my mother told me not to say anything. Moor said that he would hide the money. Mrs. Sinclair said that it would be the best he could do. He gave Mrs. Sinclair one bill. Over gave his wife a number of the bills, which she put into her bosom; this was after dark on Friday night; Over and Moor went to bed quite early. Moor slept in a restless manner; he went out of doors on Friday morning and said he was quite uneasy. Over said

that he was all right. Moor said that he did not know who had killed the man, but that he had heard that it was a white man who had done so. On Saturday morning Mary Dean called at the house, and said that he had better leave as the constables were after him. Moor gave my mother some silver to buy articles for the house. Moor and Over went after the gun on Friday morning; they brought the double barrelled gun back then; the single barrelled gun they brought back in the night, they said that Armstrong was with them, the knife was brought back, it is white handled. Over had his shot in a glass vile, and his powder in a horn."

The simplicity and candor with which the boy gave the above evidence, convinced all who heard it of its truthfulness, especially as it was corroborated in all its particulars, by his sister, a little girl about 10 years of age, who had not heard her brother's evidence.

Mrs. Armstrong was also examined, and said that her husband had been out very late on the night of the murder, and that in the morning he told her he had a $100 bill, and upon her asking him where he got it, he first said he found it, and afterwards that Moor had given it to him.

All the circumstances and evidence taken together convinced the magistrates that they had arrested the right parties, and they determined to continue the examination until they obtained sufficient evidence to convict them. The shanty in which Moor and Over had been living was torn down, but no traces of the money could be found; and no positive evidence except the boy's could be obtained until Thursday, when Armstrong made a voluntary confession, of evey particular connected with the commission of the crime—as he at that time alleged, but which he has since acknowledged is not a full confession, and, also, not correct in all its particulars. The following is the

CONFESSION.

On Thursday, the 14th of April, 1859, I left town in company with Jno. Moor and Robert Over, about half-past 8 o'clock; went first to the Railway track; walked along near the same, till we got to the Paris Road; proceded along past the first toll gate; met no one before reaching it; Over asked me if I was a man; I answered that I was; he again asked me if I could be depended upon; I told him I could. He then related to me what he was going to do; he said the mail came along there every night about 10 or 11 o'clock, in the care of one man, and it was the best strike we could make; I asked him then how he was going to do it; he said "we will make the mail man get out of the wagon, or I will make him tumble out;" I said "how will you make him tumble out?" He said "it is easy; this old thing, (pointing to the gun) never lies," and I said "good God, don't shoot the man;" he said it was the best plan; for dead men tell no tales. Moor then said "we can spare the man's life, for there are three of us, and we must be poor men if we cannot make him give up the bags without killing him." Over then said again "if he sees us we are sold." I made answer that I would rather run the risk of him knowing me again, because murder can never be hid. Moor added words to the same effect. Over then said that he would not kill him but that we would see the consequence: I said

again I would run the risk of being found out from sparing his life ; that I did not wish the man to be killed. We walked along then until we heard the buggy coming. Over pointed out our stations· I was placed on the left of the road, going up, on the edge of it. Moor about 20 yards further west, on the right· Over was in the gully on the right side, further on than Moor. The wagon came up. Moor was lying down ; I was standing. I expected Over to seize the reins of the horse, and demand him to stop ; but he did not. The first thing was the report of one barrel of the gun in the hand of Over. In about five seconds I heard the report of the second barrel ; the horse in the meantime was going on ; I jumped over the fence and ran about 15 rods back in Mr. Good's field on the right side of the road going up ; I thought that if I did not return back Over would shoot me, for fear that I would appear against him if found out. When I came back Over said I was a smart man. I said "I thought you promised that you would not shoot the man"; he added "it is done now, and it is no time to talk ;" he was leading the horse down with the man in the wagon ; just as Over was leading it down the hill the man fell out ; he led the horse some 8 or 10 feet further then let him go and turned back to the man and commenced searching his pockets ; when I saw this I turned my back and said to myself "the man who can do this can do any thing." I took hold of two bags ; Moor one and Over one with the gun; we then went over with the bags to the South and Over ripped them open with his knife when we began to open the letters, taking from them all the money we found ; had only opened one bag when a wagon was heard to pass going west, and we saw a man walking ahead of it ; Over said we could not roost there any longer ; we then passed over the Railway on the other side of the fence, and there opened the remainder of the bags ; Over cut the bags, and Moor and myself opened and searched the letters ; there was a $100, bill one $20, one $4 one $2 and three ones that I had, which together with what the other two had (as they said) made $151. We went along towards town ; I asked "what are we going to do with this money, it is no good to us now, because everybody knows that we are poor ;" Over said it was very easily arranged, for one of us could go to the States and get it changed, for American ; I said "you can go but I shall not ; because it will be telegraphed all through ; who ever goes to any part of the States will surely be arrested ;" Over made answer and said "that is the way with black folks, they are all too chicken hearted." I said that I would rather be chicken-hearted than have my neck snapped ; we than sat down near Lake's farm, and divided the money I only kept $10 for my share, and gave them the rest to get changed ; I went back on Friday Evening and gave them what I had with the exception of a $2 bill , I said "boys you had better take this money away or burn it up, for there is trouble ahead and I know it." Moor took the money. Over was not in the house at that time, Moor said in answer to me that he thought so too, and that he would give Over the money and let him do as he had a mind to. There was nobody in the house then but Moor and myself. I then left Over's house and came into town. I stopped some time at Rigg's and other places in town. I know nothing of the disposition of the money. I went home on Friday night between 9 and 10. I saw nothing more of Over and Moor till Saturday, when I saw them in the lock-up. After deviding the money, we came to the south side of Lake's new fence, when Over proposed we should hide the gun, which was done at the

brow of a hill on George S Wilkes' land. He climbed over the fence for that purpose. I went as far as Kerby's hill with Over and Moor, and got to the door of my house as the clock struck twelve. I never heard a word from Over or Moor, before that night, of any intention to rob the mail. Over promised faithfully not to kill the man, and Moor urged him also not to do so ; had I thought he would, I would have returned. I saw the single-barrelled gun at Over's house on Thursday night, when we left. Over laid it up in the loft. I have none of the money,

Having been first read over to me, I subscribe my name to this document as being correct in every particular.

JOSEPH A. ARMSTRONG.

It was no sooner made known that Armstrong was making a confession, than the excitement in the town became more intense than it had been at any time subsequent to the first announcement of the murder.

At 6 o'clock the same evening, the three prisoners were brought from the cells to the Town Hall, before the Magistrates, for further examination and committal. The excitement still continued, and in a few minutes the Town Hall was completely filled. Order was at length obtained, and the magistrates seated around the table. Mr. Mathews arose, and addressing the prisoners, said he hoped that Moor and Over would pay particular attention while the Confession of Armstrong was being read in their hearing, after which they could make any statement they wished. Mr. Weyms read the Confession in a distinct and clear voice. The prisoners were then asked what they had to say, and both Moor and Over declared it was false, and protested their innocence. Mr. Mathews then addressed them at some length upon the enormity of their crime ; and also referred, in a feeling manner, to the arrest of Mr. Cheesbro', who was as innocent as any man in the Court, remarking that, had not the real perpetrators been apprehended and brought to justice, there would always have been some uncharitable enough to have charged him with a knowledge of the crime. The prisoners were then committed for trial.

After this the public mind appeared to be more settled, and but little was heard of the murder except an occasional expression of gratification at having the guilty parties within the reach of justice.

On Saturday, the 23rd of April, the Coroner's Jury, which had adjourned from time to time, for the purpose of gaining fresh evidence, met in the Town Hall, and, after a few moments' consideration, returned the following

VERDICT—

" In the opinion of the Jury the said Launcelot Adams came to his death by being shot through the head on the night of Thursday, the 14th day of April inst., on the road leading from Brantford to Paris in the township of Brantford, and County of Brant, by a man known to the Jury as Robert Over and that the said Over was assisted in the said murder by two other men, named respectively John Moor and Joseph A. Armstrong. The Jury therefore consider it to be their duty on a careful investigation of all the circumstances and evidence laid before them to return a verdict of WILFUL MURDER against ROBERT OVER, JOHN MOOR, and J. A. ARMSTRONG."

THE TRIAL & SENTENCE.

On Friday morning, April 29th, just a fortnight from the time of the murder, Over and Moore were put upon their trial. (Armstrong was indicted seperately, in order that he might be brought forward as a witness on behalf of the crown.) It was generally understood that their trial would be the first one in the morning; and, in consequence, large crowds of persons were seen moving along in the direction of the Court House at an early hour. There was considerable of excitement manifested by the public, and some time before nine o'clock, the time appointed for the opening of the Court, the gallery, as well as the Court Room, was crowded to excess with anxious spectators. Several special constables, besides the "Regular Staff," were equipped, and placed in their proper stands, with instructions to keep the crowd from thronging the passage, and preventing the ingress and egress of witnesses and others.

At a few minutes before nine o'clock His Lordship, Chief Justice Draper, made his appearence; silence was called, and the crier, in his usual clear and audible voice, sounded the well-known and oft-repeated "O! yes, O! yes, O! yes," &c., after which the names of the petit jurors were called. Shortly the sound of chains was distinctly audible, and all eyes were turned towards the door leading to the jail, from whence the prisoners, Over and Moor, were brought loaded with heavy chains and placed in the dock. They were, however, taken back and their fetters removed, when they were again placed in the dock. The prisoners, notwithstanding they were the observed of all observers, appeared to be clam and unmoved. Over seemed even stern and malignant, while Moore appeared gentle aud composed.

A Jury was empannelled, the indictment read, and the Jurors told the prisoners had pleaded "not guilty."

Mathew C. Cameron, Esq, Q. C., conducted the case for the Crown, and Messrs Wood and Freeman for the prisoners.

Mr. Cameron opened the case, by relating to the Jury the circumstances of the late murder, the arrest of the prisoners, and the nature of the evidence that was to be brought before them.

Jonathan Hale, was the first witness called, who, being sworn, said: He lived in the town of Brantford; he knew Lancelot Adams; young Adams had taken the contract from him to carry the Mail from Paris to Brantford, and deceased was engaged by his son to do the work. The mail generally left Paris at 9 o'clock p. m., and arrived in Brantford at half past 10 o'clock. On the evening of the 14th instant it did not arrive at the usual time. On the morning of the 15th he took the first train to Paris and there learned that the mail had left the night before at the usual time, and he also learned from Mr. Smith on the cars coming up, that a horse and wagon were seen on

the side of the road; he came back on the train, which left Paris in a few minutes after he arrived there, he told the conductor of the circumstance, and asked to be let off when the train arrived opposite where the horses and wagon were seen; the conductor let him off as he desired; before he reached the wagon, he saw Mr. Greenaway going to where the body of a man lay. Mr. Greenaway told him the man was dead; he then said that the man was his mail driver; the body lay about 8 rods off the road, and the wagon was about 8 rods from the body; witness and Mr. Greenaway then commenced searching for the mail bags, two of which they found in a ravine beneath, cut open and the contents scattered in all directions; they gathered them up, and witness placed them in the wagon, and took them to Brantford Post Office; witness left Mr. J. Good in charge of the body. When he came to the body he saw what he took to be a cut; supposed it was done in falling from the wagon, but he made no examination—the face was covered with blood. Adams was an old man, but healthy, and able to indure hard labour; never heard that he was of a quarrelsome disposition; he was sober and steady.

Alex. Clement, sworn.—Am clerk in the post office in Brantford; recollect the morning of the 15th of April inst.; remember the letters, &c. having been brought in; some of the letters had been sealed with red sealing wax; they had nearly all been torn open.

Dr. E. T. Bown, sworn.—Am a medical man; never saw deceased until the morning of the 15 of April inst.. He first came to where the body was when they were preparing to remove it and told them if they would take it to the school-house he would make an examination of it; in the afternoon he made a further examination; death was caused by a gun shot; the wound was on the left side of the head; found grains of shot in the brain, should say they were about No. 4; they were in the substance of the brain; the shot had taken the direction to warrant the opinion that the person who fired the gun was lower, and a little in front, though nearly opposite deceased; there was one large orifice and several smaller ones; the wound must have caused instant death.

To the Court—If deceased had fired the fatal shot, the contents would have taken a different direction, and his face would have been scorched, which was not the case in this instance; the muzzle of the gun must have been about 8 feet from the head of deceased.

M. X. Carr, sworn—Am clerk in the Brantford post-office; recollect receiving part of the mail from Mr. Hale, on the morning of the 15th inst.; the letters had been fastened in a variety of ways; the packages had been fastened with red sealing wax; recollect that some of the large letters had been fastened with wax.

Mathew Brophy, sworn—Live at Mr. Good's; recollect the night of the 14th of this month; was at the house about 10 o'clock in the evening, when he heard two shots fired in the tavern direction; that is in the direction of the road; saw the body the next morning; think the shots were fired about 30 or 40 yards further up towards Paris than where the body lay in the morning; one shot followed shortly after the other.

Joseph A. Armstrong, one of the criminals, was placed in the witness box and examined; but as most of his evidence was but a recapitulation of his confession, which will be found in the preceding part of this pamphlet, it does not appear to be necessary to give it in full here. The witness said he had

had some conversation with Over and Moor since his confession; they asked if he was under oath when he confessed, and when he said no, they said if he would say it was a lie, there could be no proof, and they would all get clear; went to Over's house and remained a few minutes, during which time they divided the money; Over knocked at the door, and it was opened from the inside; think Mrs. Sinclair opened it; there was a candle lighted in the house during the time that witness remained. In his cross-examination, said he had been in jail before this for stealing; remembered having told Nelson in jail that he wanted to get a pistol; thought of going to Frazer River, and wanted it for that purpose. The gun was taken along to shoot geese if they saw any, so Over and Moor said. The $100 bill was whole when he had it; he did not expect leniency on account of his having told of the commission of the crime—no one held out such an inducement. The witness identified the half of a bill found at Over's house as a part of the one he took from the mail and gave to Moor.

To the Queen's Council—In my confession, I said I did not go to Over's house the night of the murder because I did not want to implicate the family.

Charles Henry Brown was examined, the purport of his evidence being the same as that given before the magistrates and published in the preceding chapter.

Alfred Hall, (colored) sworn—Know prisoner Moor, and have seen Over once or twice since; recollect the day the mail-driver was killed; heard of it on Friday; saw the prisoners that morning about 6 o'clock going towards Holmdale; one of them had a gun. They returned in about 10 minutes with two guns. Saw them again in Holmdale about noon. Had just got up when they passed in the morning. They might have had time to go as far as Wilkes' small bush, but not as far as the mill.

Mrs. Mary Dean, sworn—Know the prisoners; saw them on the Saturday after the murder; went to their house; there was no one there when witness first went there but the family; lived about 9 or 10 minutes walk from where they did; it was about 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning. Told Moor his wife sent him word to leave as soon as possible, for the constables were after him; did not tell him what for; the constables were right in. Saw no money with them on Saturday. Stopped at the house with the women on Saturday night, and on Sunday morning saw a bill between Mrs. Moor and Mrs. Sinclair, in the bed; they were talking and counting money; also saw in their hands a quarter and a York shilling. Was there on Monday morning when a search was made, but nothing but a silver spoon was found.

Cross-examined by Mr. Wood—Mrs. Moor did not see the constables go towards Over's house when she sent me to tell Moor to go away.

To Mr. Cameron.—Mrs. Moor saw Moor on Thursday; heard her call him, and when she came back she said she had been speaking to him.

Silas Tanner, (colored) sworn—Am acquainted with Moor, and know Over by sight. Recollect the murder; it was on a Thursday night; saw the prisoners on the following morning, at about 10 or 15 minutes past 7 o'clock. Over had a gun—the other had none; the gun was single-barrelled; in about 10 minutes they returned with two guns, one a double-barrelled one; saw them again at noon, they said they had been out hunting, and that when

they went up in the morning they had two guns, but Moor's hands were cold, and he carried the gun under his coat.

Benjamin Cheesbro', sworn—Recollect the night of the mail robbery and murder; left Brantford at 20 minutes past ten, in company with four others; had a strong spring wagon and one horse. Were all in the wagon from Brantford to the bottom of Good's hill, when Hall and I got out and walked up the hill; the horse walked slow, and we went on ahead. Saw nothing. It must have been about 20 minutes to 11 o'clock when we got to Good's hill.

G. Balfour, sworn—Am a Coroner for the County of Brant; have the shot that were taken from the head of deceased. The double-barrelled gun was loaded when taken at the prisoners'; saw the charge drawn, and have it. (The charge from the gun found in the possession of the prisoners, and also those taken from the head of deceased, were here produced and shown to the Jury.) Witness considered they were of the same size—No. 4.

Thos. McMeans, sworn—Am High Bailiff; saw the charges extracted from the gun; the gun was taken from Over's house; both barrels were loaded and capped.

James Weyms, J. P., sworn—Am a Magistrate for the County; the prisoners were arrested by my direction; it was on a Saturday morning; found half of a hundred dollar bill in the house, near where Mrs. Sinclair was sitting; it was rolled up; there was no search of her person made at the time; have inquired of the whole family, and they all deny knowing anything about it.

Dr. John Young Bown, sworn—Am a medical man; saw the prisoners after the late murder, in the cells; examined their nails to see if there was any blood about them; on holding Over's nail up to the window a red ray was observable; took a small substance from under his nail with a penknife, and have since carefully examined it with a powerful microscope, and have no doubt it is sealing wax. The coroner also examined it; have asked Over if he had used any sealing-wax or other red substance, and he said not.

Coroner Balfour, recalled—Have examined the substance that was taken from under Over's nail, and am satisfied that it was sealing wax.

Dr. J. Y. Bown, recalled—Was asked to examine the guns taken with the prisoners; should say upon examination of the double-barrelled gun, that it had been fired within a couple of days of that time.

Wm. Mair, sworn—Keep the first toll gate from Brantford on the Paris Road; recollect the night the mail carrier was murdered; did not see him that night; generally leave the gate open; the mail carrier generally comes along a little after 10 o'clock; saw three men of different heights go towards Paris on foot that evening between 9 and 10 o'clock; they were past the gates, and I could only see their backs; cannot say whether they were black or white.

THE DEFENCE.

Mrs. Emeline Sinclair, (colored) sworn—Know the prisoners at the bar; lived at the same house with them; recollect the report of the murder of the mail carrier; it was said to have been done on a Thursday night; the prisoners were at home that night; they were not out, to my knowledge, and

I think it impossible that they could have left the house without my knowledge. I slept with my mother and little brother that night. The prisoners, Mrs. Over, and my little sister, slept in the same room with us; first heard of the mail robbery on Friday afternoon.

Cross-examined by Mr. Cameron—The prisoners have fire-arms; saw no strangers at the house on Thursday; was away to the Dorcas Rooms in the afternoon; Armstrong was there on Friday; he was not talking on any particular subject; saw no money given to Moor from Armstrong, nor to Armstrong from Moor. Moor used to saw wood, wait at the Kerby House, and do anything that he could get to do. The Dorcas Society mainly supported us; I went to their rooms, as did also my mother, and sometimes Mrs. Over. We used to get one or two shillings a week each. I got two shillings on the Thursday before the murder was committed; Moor and Over were down town on Friday afternoon; but not in the morning before nine and ten o'clock, when we got breakfast. We sometimes had a shawl hanging up before the beds; it was up on that Thursday night; my mother was up that night; did not hear her get up, but heard her come to bed, and she said she had been up; heard no one else up in the house that night; Moor and Over were not out shooting for nearly a fortnight before their arrest.

This witness was a really handsome mollatto (a young widow), apparently about 19 or 20 years old, and gave her evidence in a firm, clear, musical voice and unfaltering tone. Indeed, her firmness and sagacity appeared to be of the very highest order. She has since been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for perjury.

Mrs. Mariah Brown, (colored,) sworn—Was taken into custody on a Saturday; have been kept in the same cell with Mrs. Sinclair. Heard about the mail man having been murdered; was told after coming to jail that it was done on a Thursday. Do not know where the prisoners were that night; they were in the house when I went to bed, about 9 or 10 o'clock; Over was then in bed. Moor always slept alone near the stove. Don't know whether I was awake during the night or not, but am sure I was not up; got up late in the morning.

Cross-examined by Mr. Cameron—Charles Henry Brown is my son; he is a very bad boy, and does not mind me as he should. Never told him what to say in this case; never spoke to him about it. Mrs. Sinclair is my daughter; did not tell her I was up on that Thursday night; I think she got no money from the Dorcas Society that week.

Mr. Wood, counsel for the defence, proposed to call Mrs. Over; but said her evidence should be entirely confined to Moor.

His Lordship thought her evidence was admissable for Moor, but not for Over.

She was then called.

Mrs. Alice Over, (colored,) sworn—Know Moor. Heard of the murder, but do not remember when it was. Mrs. Brown brought the news to the house on Friday afternoon. Moor was at home the night before I heard of the murder when I went to bed, between 9 and 10 o'clock.

REBUTTING EVIDENCE.

Mrs. Brendon, sworn—Am Financial Secretary of the Dorcas Society, and write all orders that are given by the Society. Know Mrs. Sinclair;

gave her an order on Mr. Cockshutt for some Indian meal on the 14th of April inst., but gave her no money.

Mr. Wood addresed the Jury on behalf of the prisoners, and Mr. Cameron on behalf of the prosecution.

His Lordship then summed up the evidence, and charged the Jury at great length.

At 10 minutes past 8 o'clock, p.m., the Jury retired, and the Court adjourned for one hour. Some time before the expiration of the hour, the Court House was densely crowded, all seeming anxious to hear the verdict of the Jury. At precisely 20 minutes past 9 his Lordship entered the Court room; the Jury had agreed upon a verdict and entered the Court. The interest and excitement was now greatly increased, and a deep anxiety was plainly observable upon each countenance, as the prisoners were conducted to the dock. The jurors having answered to their names, they were asked whether they found the prisoners guilty or not guilty; the answer was "GUILTY."

The verdict was recorded by the Court, and the prisoners were told to stand up.

His Lordship—Robt. Over, and John Moore, the jury have found you guilty of murder; have you, or either of you, anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon you.

Over—I am not the person that committed the murder.

His Lordship then said, now that the Jury had returned their verdict, he had no hesitation in saying that he fully concurred with that verdict, and it only remained for the Court to pronounce sentence upon them. The Law that was just to them, was more merciful than they were to the unhappy man who had fallen by their hands. It gave them time to prepare for death, and repent of the crime of which they were convicted, but they had sent their unfortunate victim to the bar of God without a moment's notice to prepare for his untimely end.

The prisoners were then sentenced to be hanged on Tuesday, the 7th of June next.

They received the sentence, as if entirely unconscious of their dreadful situation, and left the Court apparently as unmoved as they entered it. When taken to their cells they, however, confessed participation in the robbery, but said the murder was commited by Armstrong.

The manner in which the case was conducted reflects the greatest credit upon the Counsel on both sides. Messrs. Wood and Freeman evinced much talent and tact in the defence, while Mr. Cameron proved himself equally worthy of credit, by the manner in which he conducted the prosecution.

On the following Tuesday, May 3rd, Joseph A. Armstrong received his trial. His confession was read to the Jury. He urged that he was not guilty of the murder—that he pleaded for the life of Adams—and that, as soon as he was arrested, he was so impressed with the guilt of having participated in the dreadful crime, that he confessed to the authorities; and hoped that he might receive whatever consideration he was worthy of; but that he cared not what became of his body, so long as his soul was safe. He was then found guilty, and also sentenced to be hanged on the 7th of June.

THE

LIFE OF JOSEPH A. ARMSTRONG;

BY HIMSELF.

I was born in Springfield, Columbia County, State of Pennsylvania, on the 27th of January, 1835. My parents emigrated to Canada in 1837. I do not remember ever having seen my father, for the same year that we came to Canada he enlisted as a soldier. My mother had me and a younger brother to take care of; but father gave me to a gentleman in Lockport to raise. Some time after, the gentleman took me to the Poor House, where I remained until my mother heard of it, and came, in company with my step-father, and took me away to St. Catherines, where I lived for three years, when we moved to a place called "the Queen's Bush;" there we worked hard to get a home. It was nothing but a wilderness when we went there. I was only eight years old, and could do nothing but pile brush. When we had the place nearly paid for, my step-father fell sick and died. When he died, my mother was not able to get out a crop. There was a hard time for us you may think, for I was only nine years old, and I was the oldest; but we done the best we could. When I was nearly ten years old my mother married again. As soon as she got married everything went to rack; the farm, horse, cows, and everything that we had were sold. We then moved to the Towaship of Arthur, on Owen Sound Line. But little more of interest transpired until I was about fifteen, when my step-father drove me away from home, and I had to leave my kind mother, and go among strangers I never saw before. I knew very little of the world—to use a common expression, I was "very green." I hired to one Groate, for $2.50 per month, to chop cord-wood. I stayed with him for two months, when I hired to a man named Buckenham, a black man, for $5 per month. I remained with him for only one month, and then hired to a farmer named Wm. Hood, with whom I lived for six months. I done well while with him; but I unfortunately hired to a man named Moses Giles, to burn coal. Here I got into a real devil's nest; for he was a drunken sot, and kept the very worst and lowest class of people—both men and women—about him. I, being young, dancing, fidling, card-playing, and whiskey-drinking all pleased me very well, and I thought it was all the heaven I wanted. I there got in with one Solomon Tillman, who led me into all the rascality in the world. At length he proposed that we should go sailing, and I at once agreed to it; but it was not long before he got in jail. I sailed on board the *May Flower*, from Hamilton to Kingston. I sailed for three months, when I was caught in a house of ill-fame in Hamilton, and was sent to gaol for one month. I then went home and remained there all summer; but as soon as winter came on, and my step-father had nothing more for me to do, I was obliged to leave again. I then went, with a couple of robbers, to Buffalo, where we made some "city strikes," as we called them. There were three of us, but I will not tell the names of my partners. We were hard boys—

too hard for our own good; though we never troubled any person on the streets. We generally went into stores, shops, hotels, and steamboats. I was most generally the chief commander, when we boarded boats, for I knew all about where they generally kept the money. My partners were both white men, and neither a murderer. When we landed in Buffalo, we had $5 between the three of us. We laid around for four days, and then we made a strike, and when we left, between money and jewelry, we had six hundred and four dollars each. We then struck out for Detroit, and laid there one month before we done anything. We were seldom seen in the town in the day-time; never went together; and, if we met in the streets, we appeared to be perfect strangers, and passed by without noticing each other. We went well-dressed in the day-time; but we kept one suit for our business secreted, and when we were going out to commit any action, we would change our dress. We wore a quaker's rigg, and a pair of sheepskin shoe-packs, with the wool out, and we could walk all over a house, and not be heard. After we had been in Detroit one month, we went into a dwelling-house, and got, in money and jewelry, five hundred dollars. The same night we went into a wholesale clothing store, where we got seven hundred and ten dollars. We then went to our place of retirement, got our clothes, divided the money, and parted. They went to Milwaukie, and I came back to Canada. I went by the name of "Jack of the Lakes." I went back to Buffalo on the 8th of July, 1856, and laid around till the 12th, when I was dead broke. I dressed myself and went to work again, at discharging freight on the wharf. I worked at that for two weeks, when I sailed on board the *Free State* steamer from Buffalo to Chicago. I remained on board of her until the 8th of December, when I left her in Amherstburgh, where I then resided for one month. I then left for Michigan, and lived a month in the Town of Marshall. I went to the City of Jackson on the 15th of February, 1857, and boarded at the "Royal Exchange," for two months, when I went to a private boarding house. There I became acquainted with two of those picayune robbers, such as rob smoke-houses and hen-roosts. They had no money, and had to live; so we kept that up until the Spring opened, and we could get work. I then got acquainted with a young woman in the city, and became a steady young man; and I was much respected by all the respectable inhabitants of the city, both white and colored. This young woman was at service at the house of one Mr. Reynolds—a very fine man. I courted this young woman, and shortly after married her. I quit robbing, settled down, and went to work at making those fire and water-proof roofs. There was not much of that going on in the city, and I hired to a Company as foreman in a stone quarry, at $26 a month. The times were hard. I had myself and family to keep, five dollars a month rent to pay, and everything was dear. I worked on for five months, when winter set in, and we could do nothing in the quarry. Being out of employment, I left Michigan, on the 11th of January, 1858, and on the 12th I arrived at my step-father's with my family. I lived with my parents until the 26th of March following; then I moved to the town of Paris, and went to white-washing. I done well there until I got into a fight with two Irishmen. I hit one with a heavy hickory cane that I had, and in about half-an hour after there were more than 100 men after me, and I was forced to fly for my life. I went to Mrs. Wolverton's in the upper village. My wife was away to my mother's, and I staid

at this lady's house until the officers came and arrested me. I was put in Paris lock-up on the 22nd of June, and on the 23rd I got my trial, and was fined $3. I then left Paris and came to Brantford, and whitewashed with Mr. Curry and another man named Thomas Anderson. When that was over, I went to sawing wood at seventy-five cents per day. My rent was so high, and everything so dear, that I could not keep out of debt. I was then forced to sell a part of my things, and quit house-keeping. Then I got acquainted with John Moor, and we all lived together in one house. Moor and myself worked together whenever we could get anything to do; but the times got so hard that we could get no work, and we had no money, but we had to live. In last December we were for two days without anything to eat; and one evening I asked Moor to go with me down the street, to which he agreed. We passed down Queen Street until we came to Front Street, then we came on Market Street, and looked to see what we could get. I first got a hog's head and a piece of pork about 12 pounds, and then we went home. In a short time after that we went into the country and got some potatoes out of a pit. In a few nights after that, Moor and I came together up to Lowe's, in East Brantford, looking for something to eat; there we found a span of horses and wagon belonging to a farmer. I went up to the wagon to see what was in it, and found five bags of flour. I got Moor to help me to take out one of the bags, which I hid until the people were done passing, when we took it home. We were then out of meat, and we went and robbed some hen-houses and lived fast. I was then put in gaol for 20 days for the scrape I got into in Paris, not having paid the fine. I served my time, and was out only three days when I was again taken up for stealing a cloak that I and Moor took. I confessed that I stole the cloak, but did not say anything about Moor. I was tried and imprisoned one month. On the 11th of April, 1859, I got out. That same day I went to John Moor's, to get him to go with me to rob an Indian. He and his partner agreed, and we started the same day; but we could not find the place, and returned. On the 13th we agreed to rob the mail, and on the next day we carried the plan into effect; but, unluckily, we committed murder. On the 16th we were all arrested; shortly after we were committed, and all sentenced to be hanged on the 7th of June, 1859.

I warn all young men and boys who have fathers and mothers, not to leave them or disregard their advice. Whoever reads this I hope will listen to these remarks. Young men, I advise you all to keep out of the company of gamblers, night-walkers, and robbers; for if you practice these things, you will surely come to your ruin, and then you will say—"Oh! if I had listened to my father; oh! if I had listened to my mother; oh! if I had listened to Armstrong's advice—I would not have been here;" but it will be too late then. Now, while you have your liberty, is the time. As the poet says:—

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return;
This is the time that God hath given,
To escape from hell, and fly to heaven."

O! my dear friend, as you read this page, I hope you may take this to yourself. If you are not in the path of peace, oh! let me beseech you to turn before it is too late. Parents, do not let your Children run about at night. Never be too severe with the rod, for there is a medium to go by in raising a

family. You can be too hard or not hard enough. The best plan with a rude child is to talk and counsel with it. Any person will be led further than driven. When a child gets to be 14 or 15 years of age, if you are too severe with the rod, the Devil will urge it night and day to run away; he will tell it all manner of fine tales, and hold out all sorts of inducements, until the child leaves its parents. But ah! my young friend, that is the first step to your ruin. Let me advise you, my dear young friend never to take that thought, for the Devil is only getting you into his net, and when he gets you nicely in he will pull, and then you will soon find yourself in prison for some crime.—Then you will regret having left your friends; but it will be too late then. Now is the time, while you are at home and have your friends to talk with. While you have your liberty, let me advise you to turn to God, with all your heart and soul, and he will guide you through all trouble and danger. Whoever reads this I hope will take counsel by it. May God be with you all, is the prayer of

JOSEPH A. ARMSTRONG.

SKETCHES OF OVER AND MOOR.

Over says he was born a Slave in Virginia. His mother was a West Indian, and his father African and Spaniard. He escaped from Slavery about 10 years ago and is in his 28th year. He is a small man, has a low receding forehead, and appears to be favorably organized for the commission of all sorts of crime. His countenance generally wears a sort of malignant scowl, and even his smiles appear more to indicate the contemplation of evil, than a calm, pleasant feeling. When the writer last conversed with him, he admitted having buried some of the money, but declared he should never tell any person where. "It," said he, "may rot in the ground at the same time that I do—I shall be punished for taking it, and it shall benefit no person after I am out of the world."

Moor is a lighter Mulatto than Over, and appears to be of a more gentle disposition. He gives his age as 23 years, and says he was born at Stamford, Canada West. His ancestors were slaves, and his father obtained his liberty by being his master's own child. His family are pious, respectable people, and reside near Windsor. He has admitted on one or two occasions, when separated from Over, that Over shot Adams, but when in the cell with Over he says he does not know which it was, but thinks it was Armstrong. He is evidently very much under the influence of Over.

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